9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6
GOZO

CHAPTER XIX

Gozo

All round the cave-mouth there flourished a luxuriant copse of alder trees and black poplars and rich-scented cypresses: therein roosted birds of long wing, owls and hawks and chattering hook-billed crows—birds of the sea whose livelihood was from the waters. A young strong vine loaded with bunches of grapes wreathed the opening of the cave. Four springs quite near together jetted out translucent water in separate rills ingeniously contrived, each to water its own garden-plot. The soft lawns were starred with parsley and violets. Even an immortal coming upon the nook would pause before its beauty and feel his heart made glad.

IT IS POSSIBLE—INDEED, PROBABLE—THAT THE MODERN visitor would fail to recognize from these words, taken from T. E. Lawrence's translation of the *Odyssey*, the cave of Calypso as it appears to-day, surmounting and overlooking the sandy bay of Ramla on the north coast of Gozo. Still less easily, perhaps, would he recognize it from the passage in *Télémaque* in which Fénelon describes the grotto in language even more exuberant. 'As Malta is S. Paul's island, so is Gozo Calypso's; and it may be that nothing but an earthly paradise was deemed meet for the entertainment by an immortal of so critical a guest as Odysseus.

True, there are corners of Gozo that fall not far short of the picture imagined by the great Archbishop of Cambrai: I have in mind especially the little Chapel of Lunzjata (the Annunziata) in a grove of ancient almond- and carob-trees between Victoria and the village of Kerchem, facing the munificent Perellos's graceful fountain at the head of the rich little *wied* (valley) that runs down to Xlendi. Whether this glade is seen in the spring, when it is a mass of blossom

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that would not disgrace Taormina, or in the summer, when its tangled mass of vegetation forms an almost solid screen of verdure from the blazing sun, it would seem a fitting lair for the daughter of Atlas if it did not rather conjure up, with its figs, its vines, its calamus and its pomegranates, a vision of the Song of Songs.

Certainly Gozo is more fertile, less rocky, more verdant than is Malta. Edward Lear called its scenery "pomskizillious and gromphiberous, being as no words can describe its magnificence." It is not broken up to anything like the same extent by the stone and rubble walls which in the larger island so provokingly conceal gardens and fields from all except aviators. In Gozo it is easy to enjoy wide vistas of green corn and purple clover, of terraced cultivation along the contours of its seven flat-topped hills.

Like Malta, Gozo ends on its south-western coast in sheer rock-faces that rise abruptly as much as 400 feet from the sea. But elsewhere its coast-line is more varied than Malta's, with its pleasant miniature fjords of Xlendi and Xini, the yellow sands of Ramla, the blue lagoon of Qala Dwejra, the mysterious landlocked bay of Kawra, the grim cliffs of Ta Ċenċ and Ras il Wardija. Its architecture, too, is highly characteristic, and although its villages bear a general resemblance to the casals of Malta, they can be distinguished from these by the handsome carved stone balconies which have happily remained one of Gozo's pleasantest and most live traditions. These balconies are a feature throughout the island but are to be seen at their best in the Manderaggio of Victoria, for Gozo, too, has its Manderaggio.

The capital of the island, Rabat or Victoria—Rabat because it is the suburb of the walled fortress above it—sprawls pleasantly at the foot of the great rock on which rises, like Edinburgh Castle, its bastioned and embattled citadel. This high place was designed as a stronghold, a place of refuge from the Barbary pirates, just as were the little hill-towns of the Riviera, Eze and many another, that look down on the